

VZCZCXRO2850

PP RUEHDU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMR

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ZNR UUUUU ZZH

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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3476

INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY PRIORITY

RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2055

RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS KINSHASA 000461

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR OES/PCI-STEWART AND OES/IHA-SINGER

DEPT PASS USAID FOR AID/W/AFR MHARVEY AND KODONNELL

HHS FOR OGHA STEIGER/BHAT

HHS PASS TO CDC FOR BLOUNT/JANI/LEDUC/NCOX/ARTHUR

GENEVA FOR WHO

USDA/APHIS/US/NCIE FOR BURLESON

USDA/FSIS FOR RHARRIES

USDA/FAS/CMP/DLP FOR MFRANCOM

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [KFLU](#) [TBIO](#) [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [SENV](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: DRC: AVIAN INFLUENZA UPDATE

REF: KINSHASA 357

¶1. (U) The GDRC Avian Influenza Commission (reftel) met on March 16 at WHO headquarters in Kinshasa, chaired by Minister of Agriculture Constant Ndom Nda Ombel, and reviewed developments in the DRC since the last meeting. The commission reiterated its call for USD 66 million to combat Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in the DRC, and maintained its plans to purchase three million doses of Tamiflu and to compensate industrial poultry operations if culling becomes necessary. UNICEF reported on its efforts to coordinate communication networks nationwide in order to report any suspected HPAI outbreaks and to inform the public on ways to avoid infection by HPAI if it is found in the DRC.

¶2. (U) At a press conference following the Commission meeting, Minister Ombel responded to reports of bird die-offs in three different regions of DRC. He confirmed reports of more than 200 chickens dead from unknown causes in the town of Tshikapa, province of Western Kasai, several chickens and ducks found dead from unknown causes in western Bas-Congo, near the border with Cabinda, and small numbers of chickens and birds found dead in and around Kinshasa. He stressed that no cases of HPAI have been confirmed within the DRC. He called for increased efforts to prepare for an eventual HPAI outbreak.

¶3. (U) Avian Influenza has received much DRC media coverage since being discovered in Nigeria a month ago. There have been anecdotal reports of chickens dying in the Kinshasa market and confirmed reports of migratory birds from Europe in Western Kasai. Again, though, there has been no confirmation of HPAI infection in poultry or wild birds in the DRC. One expert noted that many chickens die every year from infections such as Newcastle's Disease, totally unrelated to HPAI. According to Ministry of Agriculture officials, samples from the dead chickens discovered in Tshikapa, Western Kasai are being sent to Pretoria for

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analysis.

¶4. (U) For now, with no confirmed presence of HPAI in Congolese poultry and wild bird populations, reports of bird die-offs are just grist for the rumor mill. They may serve the purpose, though, of increasing the monitoring and

communication necessary to detect HPAI if it does arrive in the DRC. Media coverage is also passing the message about ways to avoid human infection from sick or dead birds. Meanwhile, the GDRC is looking for multilateral and bilateral support to prepare for the eventuality of the discovery of HPAI in the country.

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